

Unified Funding Management; Bank On It In Fiscal Year 2004

Using Appropriated Funds As Nonappropriated Funds Increases Efficiency, User Friendliness

By Harriet Rice

After five years of testing and groundwork, Unified Funding Management, formerly Uniform Resource Expanded Program, may become reality in fiscal year 2004.

UFM is the merging of appropriated funds and nonappropriated funds for the purpose of providing MWR services under the NAF rules and procedures in order to make procurement, personnel management, and financial reporting and management more efficient and user-friendly.

In 1996, a two-year UREP concept test was legislated by section 335 of the 1996 National Defense Authorization Act. All four branches of service participated in the test; Fort Campbell, Ky., and White Sands Missile Range were the Army's test installations.

After the test was completed, officials briefed the services and DoD senior MWR leaders. A report was sent to Congress. In 2002, Congress approved legislation to implement UFM in section 323 of the FY 03 NDAA.

CFSC's Dennis Walsh, chief of the Financial Plans and Programs office in the Financial Management Directorate has been there every step of the way, championing and shepherding the process for the Army. He credits support from Charles Abell, a former senate staffer now serving as assistant secretary of defense for force management policy, for helping successfully navigate the legislative lanes.

Feedback caught up with Walsh for an interview detailing the next steps in implementing UFM.

Feedback: From the time of UREP inception and testing in 1996 until now

when the concept has been approved, has there been any change in the basic concept?

Dennis Walsh: I don't think there have been any changes. UFM is really a support process for the operators. What we're trying to do is make life easier for them—the director of community activities, the division chief, the program/activity manager, the facility operator—trying to create a streamlined, simplified process

“We're making sure we bring a sense of ownership from everybody...”

for doing their jobs. That means focusing on support systems: procurement, contracting, personnel, financial management, payroll—all those things that managers have had to deal with through a dual resourcing system, which will become one system under UFM.

FB: Why did the name change from UREP to UFM?

DW: I think it was just in the legislative development. It became “uniform funding and management.” That was really the [Congressional] staffers' language when they reached an agreement through the joint conference.

FB: Why did UFM have to go through Congress and be included in the

FY 03 Defense Authorization bill?

DW: The things we want to do could not be achieved without legislation. It wasn't simply a matter of DOD fiscal policy. Everything had to be done to the letter of the law, and we wanted to assure people that we weren't going to create a process that resulted in employees being in a disadvantaged state by changing their status from APF to NAF. That was a big concern of the staffers, particularly on the house side, and that's why we had to have legislation.

FB: What happens next?

DW: Between now and September 2003, we are in the implementation planning stage. Successful implementation requires a very strong investment in the planning process. We're making sure we bring a sense of ownership from everybody: from operators at the installation level—they're part of the development process—to the regions, the Installation Management Agency headquarters, the assistant chief of staff for installation management and the Community and Family Support Center. We constructed the teams of subject matter experts to ensure that happens.

Another thing we intend to do is have outside agencies work with us, such as the Army Audit Agency, for every functional team initiative to ensure we're doing things correctly and that we're following the law.

FB: Tell me more about the SME teams.

DW: There's a financial team, a procurement team, a human resources team, and a project management team. Those teams will be the worker bees that develop

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and write the plan to present to the steering committee.

The steering committee will be headed by representatives from the Army secretariat (manpower and reserve affairs and financial management), and they will guide us through the coordinating process with the major commands, through the MWR Board of Directors process to the Army staff, the secretariat and up the chain to OSD.

FB: Are there going to be people on these teams representing all levels of MWR from installations up to CFSC?

DW: Yes. Each team has an installation representative on it. There is a garrison commander on the project management team; someone from an installation FM division on the financial management team, and IMA regional representatives on the coordinating team. CFSC is also represented on the teams.

FB: When do you expect to have these teams in place?

DW: We hope to officially kick this off the minute the MWR BOD Executive Committee approves it. They met Jan. 30-31.

FB: Will the plan be staffed with the field?

DW: Absolutely. The coordinating team's major responsibility, aside from providing oversight for the project teams, is to coordinate the presentation of this process to major Army command commanders through the MWR BOD Executive Committee and through the Army staff.

We have an office of the secretary of defense representative on the coordinating committee to lay the groundwork for the DOD process. We cannot implement

UFM without the approval from OSD. So we're going to bring OSD staff in early in the process so there are no surprises. They have to go through the OSD controller, fiscal policy, and general counsel.

It's tremendously complicated, and it's really going to be almost a full-time effort for us.

FB: What is the timeline?



Dennis Walsh is CFSC's chief of the Financial Plans and Programs office in the Financial Management Directorate.

DW: Our goal is to have the plan presented before the end of FY 03 and approved by September 2003. It's extremely aggressive.

FB: There's been lots of talk about the "All-NAF workforce." Is that part of UFM, and how far off is that transition?

DW: Yes, the transition of the workforce to a single NAF workforce is a part of UFM. We think it will probably be five or six years, maybe even more, before we have a totally single workforce. It's important for people to understand there will be

no forced conversions, and one of the key ingredients to successful implementation of UFM is workforce ownership. We want the workforce to feel a part of this, to understand what it is and what it's not. That takes a while.

FB: How does Utilization Support and Accountability for MWR fit into the picture?

DW: USA was an interim measure to get us in line for UFM. Once UFM is fully implemented, USA will go away. Today we run approximately 20 percent of the direct APF support through the USA process. The NAF world is not unaware of how this is going to work. They already do a big part of it right now.

FB: What impact does UFM have on A-76 and The Third Wave?

DW: To me, UFM is just a different way of doing business, and if the leadership believes that UFM is a way of opening doors to address issues of the Secretary of the Army, we believe there are great opportunities. Whether we do UFM or not, there are certain expectations the Secretary has that we need to meet. I believe UFM is a step in the right direction.

FB: Will there be special budget instructions for FY 04?

DW: There will be an amended set of instructions

for the garrisons and the regions to get them alerted to how things will work. The specifics of that are really going to be left to the teams to develop.

FB: How does UFM mesh with the Installation Management Activity?

DW: One of the things I think we've been able to improve on is adapting UFM to the IMA and the way the Army has constructed installation management. You have to remember that before the IMA was created we had at least 14 MACOMs

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to deal with. Now we have just one: the headquarters IMA.

The teams are going to be focused on finding the easiest way for us to get services to the garrison operator through that single major command. That really reduces the amount of work we have to do. If these teams can create ideas and support systems through the IMA, it's going to make things a whole lot easier than having to tailor it to each MACOM as we had to in the past.

FB: What is the biggest challenge you face in the planning stage?

DW: The biggest challenge we have right now is getting a commitment from the people we know who can make this work. Our experience has been, when you get a really new idea, people don't want to commit themselves. They know they have all their own work to do and they don't believe anyone will pick up the slack for

them. So they're afraid to really jump in.

The dynamics of this are sensitive. There could be a real showstopper if we overlook anything, whether it's in personnel, or cash flow or anything.

FB: Will there be a Web site or point of contact where people who have questions or input about this can call or email?

DW: Yes, that's in our plan. In fact, one of the jobs of the project management team is the public affairs and internal command information education effort. The human resource group will be asked to put together a package for the workforce. We intend to reach every MWR employee in the world.

FB: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

DW: Yes. In all the years I've been associated with MWR, the most amazing thing to me is how innovative installations operators are in getting the job done. They

have such good ideas and all too often we don't listen very well.

We really need their input, and that is why we were insistent that each team have an installation representative. We don't need to limit it to that one person. What we would like is for them to discuss things with their peers and get a good network of experts out there testing the ideas.

Anytime or anywhere we brief UFM, we ask people to share their thoughts with us, and that's helped us greatly, especially in the personnel issues. You just can't cover everything. It's good for people to ask us questions, especially those stationed overseas.

We want people not to be afraid. We want them to see this as an opportunity to really improve how we deliver services to the soldier.

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MWR Downrange

Bagram's Dragon Palace a Respite For Soldiers

By Spc. Alfredo Jimenez, Jr.

The enemy didn't want anybody to use the building so they bombed it.

Combined Joint Task Force-180 personnel needed it, so they gathered a few Afghans to help rebuild it.

Today, that building is perhaps the most used at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

Dragon Palace, Bagram Air Base's Morale, Welfare and Recreation facility, is two stories high and 60 feet wide. Hundreds of freezing soldiers visit in droves. It's often crowded, but nothing seems to keep visitors away.

Located beside the North Dining Facility, Dragon Palace has a phone center, cyber café, library and shows a movie every night. This palace helps coalition service members endure the frustration of being deployed for six months in a war-torn country.

"It's always packed in here," said Arthur Chandler, MWR coordinator from Atlanta, Texas.



Soldiers use the computers at the Cyber Café at Bagram Air Base's Dragon Palace.

The phone center has 15 phones ready to allow soldiers personal moments with loved ones and others back home. A movie "theater" is also downstairs, designed to recharge visitors' minds.

The cyber café is upstairs, complete with computers with email access.

"These things help the soldier maintain a high state of morale," Chandler said. "It allows him or her to keep in touch with folks back home."

The library, located behind the theater space, gives soldiers a chance to sit, relax and read a book in a quiet area. More than 150 books can be found at any time in the library, in addition to countless magazines, newspapers, games and puzzles.

"[Dragon Palace] is a place that can be enjoyed by everyone," Chandler said.

[Spc. Jimenez is with the 28th Public Affairs Detachment]